

Letter to the Editor

The Arkansas Clean Indoor Air Act passed in July 2006. Although the law protects some workers in Arkansas from secondhand smoke in the workplace and public places, many are still exposed to the deadly chemicals found in smoke while at work.

Bartenders, wait staff and musicians that work in these smoking establishments experience the negative health effects of working in smoking environments. According to the American Cancer Society, food service workers have a 50 percent greater risk than the general public of dying from lung cancer, in part, because of their ongoing exposure to secondhand smoke in the workplace. Why should they suffer the consequences of secondhand smoke exposure?

Secondhand smoke causes heart disease and lung cancer. It can cause coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, red or teary eyes, runny nose, sneezing and sore throat. Every year, more than 53,000 people in the United States die from the effects of secondhand smoke exposure, with more than 500 adults dying annually in Arkansas alone.

While people may be concerned that prohibiting smoking in currently exempted establishments might hurt business or sales, research shows there has been an increase in sales when smoke-free laws are implemented comprehensively. A 2010 study conducted by the University of Arkansas Sam M. Walton College of Business Center for Business and Economic Research shows cities in the Southeastern Conference that implemented comprehensive smoke-free policies in bars, on average, had a 25 percent positive impact on sales tax revenues relative to those that did not. Cities that implemented comprehensive smoke-free policies in restaurants, on average, had an almost 18 percent positive impact on sales tax revenues relative to those that did not.

If research shows that comprehensive smoke-free policies do not hurt bars and restaurants, and that in fact, these policies can increase sales, then why do we continue to expose Arkansans to deadly secondhand smoke?

The Arkansas Clean Indoor Air Act of 2006 was a great step for Arkansas, but it wasn't enough. We still have much more to do to protect ALL Arkansans from secondhand smoke, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or occupation.

Sincerely,

First and Last Name
Organization/Coalition Name